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For Immediate Release
June 20, 2005

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Sen. Patterson fights to keep school bus safety inspections

LANSING – School children and Michigan’s School Bus Safety Inspection program moved one step closer to being protected from the budget ax, announced State Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

“Parents and students are right to expect that buses carrying our children to school are safe,” Patterson said. “Losing just one child in an accident that could be prevented by an inspection is too high a cost to justify the savings the state might have realized by cutting this program.”

The governor’s 2005-06 budget proposal called for the elimination of the State Police School Bus Inspection program, resulting in a projected savings of \$1.3 million. Additionally, the governor’s proposal called for repeal of a state law requiring school buses to be inspected. Sen. Patterson opposed each of these proposals.

Last year, state school bus inspections “red tagged” more than 2,100 of the state’s 17,800 buses (nearly 13 percent) for serious safety violations. They had defects so severe they were deemed unsafe to transport students and required immediate repair.

“That statistic alone demands a continuation of inspections,” Patterson said. “We can economize in other areas. But I am determined to make our children’s safety a priority.”

Without the statewide program, schools wanting their buses inspected would have to perform those inspections on their own, without any additional money from the state. Or, if the governor’s proposal were approved, schools could choose not to conduct the inspections at all.

“School buses in suburban Wayne County travel thousands of miles a year, so the partnership we have with the State Police, and now the assurance of full funding for the bus inspection program, will allow us to remain confident in the safety of our buses and our kids,” said Dr. Leonard R. Rezmierski, Northville’s school superintendent and outgoing President of the Tri-County Alliance of school superintendents.

School Administrators can work with the State Police to find ways to make the program as cost efficient as possible.

“As Wayne County Schools’ Transportation consultant, I am pleased the Senate Appropriations Committee listened to the concerns of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation, the Pupil Transportation Advisory Council and related organizations,” said Tim Hooper. “As a result, they realize the importance of objective and professional bus inspections to the ongoing safety of public school children. I hope the final budget will support the continued Michigan State Police inspections of school buses.”

The Senate’s budget bill now goes to the House for consideration.

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